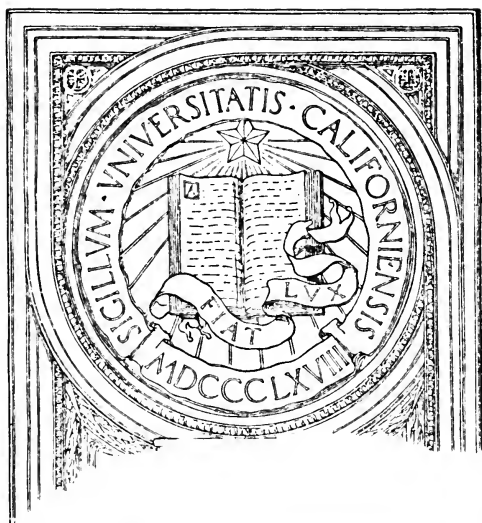


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TOWER OF IVORY

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BY

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

WITH A FOREWORD BY

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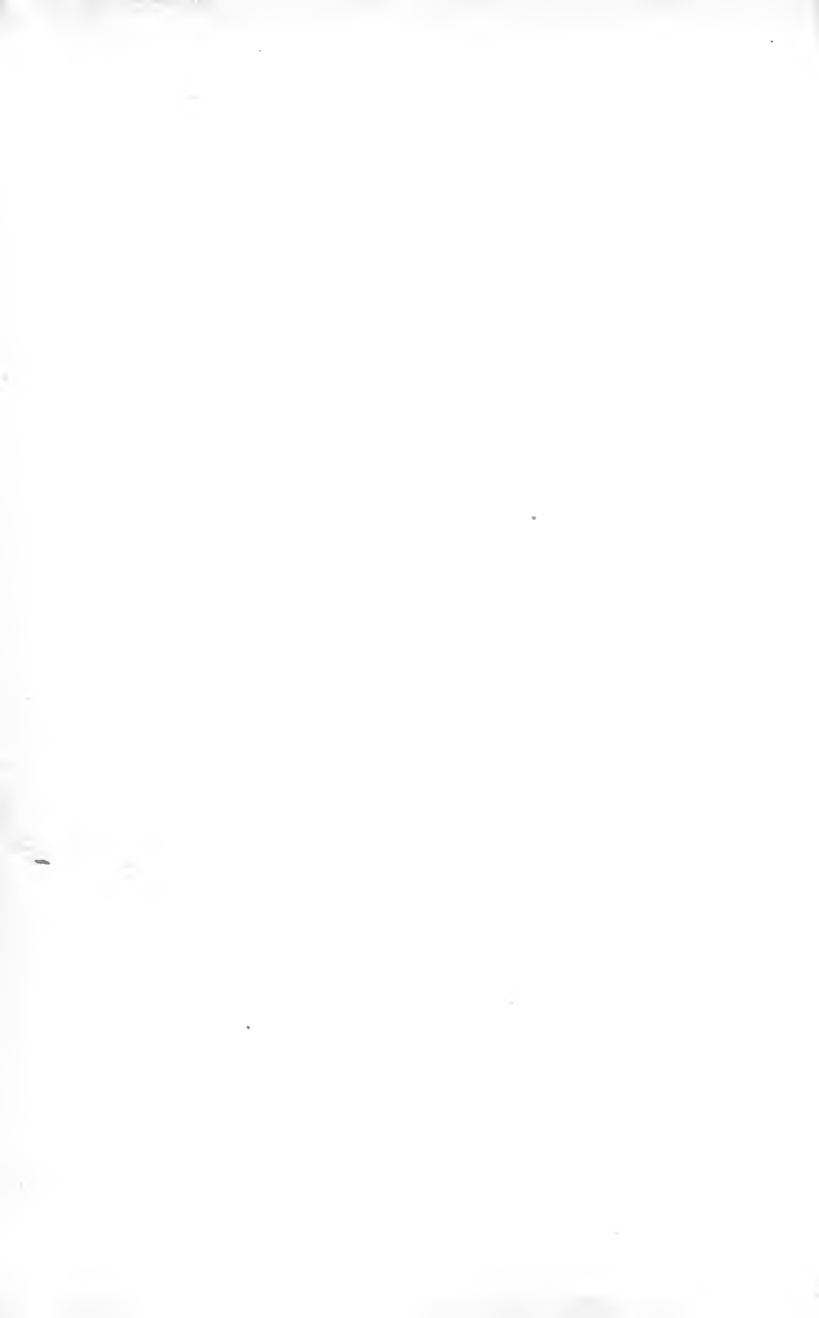
Certain of the following poems have appeared in *The Yale Review* and *Harper's Weekly*. To the editors and owners of these magazines the author desires to express his appreciation of their courtesy in permitting him to reprint.

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TOWER OF IVORY



OUR LADY OF TROY

[In the Dutch translation of the original Faust Legend, published by Spiess in Frankfurt in 1587, it is established that the "notorious sorcerer and black-artist" was seized by the Devil at midnight on the 23d of October, 1538, while sitting with a company of students in the tavern of Rimlich near Wittenberg.]

[Scene: The great room of an ancient tavern in the village of Rimlich. Stubs of candles guttering in their sconces on the back wall, and a smouldering fire in a wide chimney-place give an uncertain light. Three students from Wittenberg sit together at one end of the oak table. They are singing in high good humor. At the other end of the board sits Faustus, wrapped in a great cloak still wet from the storm that beats at door and window, and beside him is his servant, Wagner. A strange horologe on the back wall points to half-past eleven.]

Students [singing]

In dulce jubilo—
Drink and be merry, oh!
Wine is old laughter.
Whoso will rise again
Sickens and dies again
Here and hereafter.
No immortality
But this reality
Lasts a day longer.
Drink and be merry, oh!
In dulce jubilo—
Death is the stronger.

Christopher

Better lads! Some'at better,—you there,
Fritz,
Your diatonics would make Ockenheim
Writhe i' the worms. You should have Ah
—not *Ah*—
On that first jubilo—o—o.

Matthiolus

Hush you! We stopped the stranger in his
tale.

He'd glimpsed at Eden from the Caucasus
When you two started Dulce—'tis a tune
I can't forbear the taste of—jubilo!
But come, good Doctor; here's to Eden.
Health!
Saw you the serpent?

Faustus

I saw naught to fear,
There's naught to fear from Heaven
through to Hell;
Nothing that mind can't solve, Mind is the
king—

Fritz

And queen too—ah the gold and scarlet
minds
O' Lasses! Hey lads? And the golden lips
Of many golden tunes,—how goes the
song?—
“Bursts the red grape, sweet oh sweet!
Lips o' maid are sweeter.”

Christopher

Be still, Fritz! That's an evil tune,—thin
tune,

No true antiphony. Grant him a space
To save himself from craggy Caucasus
Before you make a rainbow of a maid.

Faustus

Ah, you've the true mathesis, sir, the pure
Sciential. Step by step your logic mind
Works to the core of things; seeks me out
first

An elixation, seething of the thoughts
Hot in the stew-pan of the brain before
Elixir's had. All true philosophy
Progresses thus; expulsion here, and here
Assation till the pure digested truth
Turns into fire,—else there is myopsy
And phantoms seen.

Christopher

The true mathesis, Fritz!
You mark? I'm hailed philosopher.

Fritz

His eye
Reflects a certain doubt upon his tongue.

Faustus

The Epicuran, Leo Decimus,
Had such a mind. He questioned how the
soul

Which was not, was, and then was not again
Should be immortal; so he summoned him
His doctors and his clerks and bade them
speak

Backward and forward, he digesting all
Their doctrines and logomachies and rules,
Believing here, denying there, and ending
With Gallus': "*Redit in nihilum quod ante
Nihil.*" And judged uncommon well. The
soul,

Or, as your Paracelsus saith, the four
Seed covers of the spirit—what are these
But thought ill-elixate, a crapula
Troubling the brain?

But I digress somewhat
From Eden; so did mother Eve, but she
Was woman. Man must ever set his face
Toward the sunset, make his pilgrim way
Into the West. There is no pause for dream
With all the shining kingdom of the mind,
All truth, all science, all the stars to reap,
And Time forever clattering at heel

Like bones the children tie to yelping curs.
So then, our true mathesis, next and next!
From Caucasus I wandered back to Rome—
Three days in the Vatican invisible,
Ate with the Pope, snatched from his holy
dish
Beneath his holy fingers, stole his cup
Out from his stretching hand; oh saints! to
see
Him grasp for wine to cool a burning tongue,
Blistered with meat, and miss the cup and
stare
Mouth open at its sudden flight toward
Heaven,
While all the table thumbed their beads and
gasp
Nunc dimittis, and crossed at brow and chin.
They rang the bells three hours to flout the
devil.

Christopher

They blamed the devil, then.—It's so at
Rome:
Lack food, lack gold, lack kisses, blame the
devil!

Mātthiolus

The fools! I follow Scaliger, who says
The devil's dead. Old Trismegistus' self
Ne'er saw him—only hoofspore in the sand,
His ass no doubt. And as for your nine
orders,

Beelzebub, Apollo Pythius,
Belial, Asmodaeus, and Abaddon,
Diabalos, Meresin, Satan, Mammon,—
Your hierarchy of sprites terrestrial,
Sublunary, aquatic,—earth and sky,
I'll none of 'em.

Faustus

Your sciolist in truth!
Your true agnosticus! "Unseen, Unknown"
Is sacred text for schoolmen. I myself
With deepest cabalistic—metaphysic—
What have I found o' midnights in the flame?
No satyrs, cacodemons, foliots,
No Bel of Babylon, no Greek Astartes,
No fairies such as Paracelsus saw,
Nor naiads that Olaus Magnus met
And feasted with on some moon-stricken
shore,

Nothing of these,—but one who is sheer
mind,

The globing crystal of the world wherein
All knowledge gleams and darkens, one who
knows

The eagle's way in air, the snake's on sand,
And man's way who is eagle both and worm.

Matthiolus

A marvel truly—was't Vergilius
The sorcerer of Rome?

Christopher

Was't Aristotle?

Wagner

I pray you, master, hearken how the storm
Breathes in the hush, and troubled thunder
crawls

Along the rim of earth. 'Tis almost time,
'Tis almost midnight. Harken!

Faustus

So, my boy!

'Twill be at midnight. Naming of a name
Ne'er brought Shekinah sooner to the ark.

Wagner [hurriedly]

You told them, master, how the bells were
rung

At Rome to flout the devil. Tell them now
How you became Mahomet.

Faustus

Ha! Mahomet!

To see me clad in linen setting forth
A crocodility of hours and houris!
The sultan prayed to me; but Moslem faith
Is no theology for scholars. Phew!
I'll warrant there were heretics enough
Fouling the sacred porches where I taught.

Wagner

And then the serpent!

Faustus

Ah, the golden snake
I turned to gold.

Wagner

The burning fiery ice!

Faustus

Here, lad, you're puffing out the tale. 'Twas
fire
I froze to ice—the crystal phlogiston.—

[To Matthiolus]

You, sir, will understand. But ice on fire!
Not Vergil's self had science to do that.

Wagner

And how you made king Alexander walk!

Faustus

Hush! Hush! The emperor was not o'er-
pleased
And all of Innsbruck chattered in its bed.

Fritz

King Alexander! Nay, we heard the tale.—
A certain Faustus, a philosopher,
Who had a magic to restore the dead
And make them rise. Are you—

Christopher

King Alexander!

And did he speak? Was't Greek? What
said he then?

Faustus

No word. You understand my science ill
Who think I raise the dead. The dead are
dead.

They lie who say that Iamblicus once
wrought

Centurions of Cæsar out of air,
That battled and were stricken and could
strike.

The dead are dead;—but metaphysic knows
How smoke may shine like armor and be
blown

To features of dead kings. 'Tis so with all
Man knows or ever shall know to the end.
Mind shall be king, shall break in through
the glass

That shows itself, itself; shall analyse
And test and know and fashion into word
The thing that Is; but no thought ever shall,
Until this siderated sphere be burst

Into a million twinklings, build new thing,
Nor call up life or beauty from the void,
Nor make the dead whose flesh is dead, alive.

Fritz

I wallow in old ignorance. But still
There's miracle in that apparent smoke
You hold so lightly.

Christopher

Aye, that's miracle
To make their hair move. Show us but a
glimpse
Of that smoke-Alexander, and your name
Shall ride with Nostradamus' Pleiades
Down to the end of Time.

Matthiolus

By Heaven, Yes!
I'll write you in clear latin, with a boss
Of gold and crimson, on the parchment roll
Of Wittenberg's immortals. But no smoke
Of Alexander. 'Twas a tearful king,
A bulk of griefs.

Christopher

The Apostate Julian
Declares his soul had entered into flesh
Before he conquered Persia. He would be
No better than a lion.

Fritz

Circe then!

We'll have a woman. What's an age-dead
man?

Old heroes are as thick as water-cress.
But women, Ah!—the roses that are fallen,
Stars that are dust, old sorrows and old
songs!
What woman?

Matthiolus

Helen of Troy!

All

Helen of Troy!

Come, call her back for us, let us see Helen!

Faustus

Nay, she would be but smoke, a puff of
smoke,

Smoke and a shadow, woman and no flesh;
What fool desires a woman that no arms
May crush the wine of, and no lips find
sweet?

All

Helen of Troy, Call Helen up, Call Helen!

Matthiolus

Show us that mind can fashion out of air
The beauty that the flesh surrendered up.

Wagner

Nay master, let these necromancies be,
These magics out of air, these vaporous
Appearances of flesh long turned to mould.
The clock whirs for the hour. Oh make
your peace
With heaven, if there still be—

Faustus

Silence thou!
The mind knows no conclusion, finds no end,
But its own seeking; and my seeking was
The true entelechy, the living seed,

The root wherefrom this universe is blown
A golden flower. Shall I stand because
Time threatens me? Shall I not rather flaunt
My learning in the face of him and say:

"Here see how I make mock of you, how I
Have digged this richest treasure from the
soil

Of old forgotten centuries of time;
How I, whom you shall conquer, yet strike
down

Your mystery and set this little brain
The worms shall spoil, above your awful-
ness—

And all with science-ashes and a smoke!"?
Shall mind fear death that knows within itself
All life and all begetting and all end?

[There is a sound of thunder and the rain
beats heavily at door and window. Faustus goes to the hearth. The candles have guttered down and are now dead. The students lean over the table watching him. Suddenly he stands erect, flinging a handful of ashes on the fire. The flames sink, then rise in a great flare. Helen of Troy stands on the hearth. She is naked and

her limbs shine like silver in the light.
Her hands are at her breast. Faustus
steps back.]

Matthiolus

'Tis thou! Forgive me!

Christopher

O the wonderful
Sad eyes, the lips like prayer!

Fritz

Her beauty seems
As all the tides of ocean ebbing down
Out of the heart to her.

Faustus

Oh blind! blind! blind!
Ye eagerly deceived! Ye gladly tricked
To dull believing! Fools! And I have sold
My flesh and old rebellious hope of Heaven
To doubt what you run panting to believe.
I have forsworn all peace to keep aflame
The will you quench in faith—the will to try

All life and living in the Alkahest
Of thought, to set the single mind above
All seeming, all appearances, to match
With sense all emptiness, to crumble faith
Into its ignorance. This blowing smoke,
This shadow of an age-long vanished girl—
Ye gape and watch the fuming vapor twist
And call it miracle. But to the mind
That knows how light and shadow form and
 solve
Into each other 'tis a petty trick
Of eye on brain, a mimicry of life
As senseless as the many-seeming clouds.
Ye blind who live in darkness and believe!
I wrought the maid to mock you. Now
 almost
I weep that you have suffered such content
When such great light illumines. Mind has
 torn
The veil that hangs before the Riddler's lip,
Has found the riddle answered,—time and
 space
And life and very dying has the brain
Ground to their atoms and their ancient
 laws;
And soul, and mystery, and stuff of dream

Are rainbow-winking bubbles in the bowl
That vanish and are nothing. Lo, this ghost
That makes a mock of them! This thing of
 air,
Smoke-wrought and smoke-enduring! Such
 as she,
Appearances and shadows, are all things
That flesh may not acknowledge,—yet the
 mind
Has conquered even these, has found them
 vain,
A nothingness, an emptiness, a smoke.

[A great gust of wind shakes the house.]

Faustus [turning toward the door]

I fear you not; I've held the globing world
Of wisdom in my hand. There is no space
Of all the universe I have not won;
No door is closed—shall I then grudge the
 coin
That pays for this, or hoard the penny when
The ribbon's bought? It's worth the taste
 of death
To know that death is silence, and the dust

Is all and end of our eternity.
Nay, death has had no hostages of me;
I hope no morning from him and I fear
His darkness nothing. It is time. I wait.

[The storm drops suddenly. In the hush
the fire grows brighter, and the figure of
Helen suddenly becomes a glow of light.]

Fritz

Look! Lo! She moves—her hands are
raised—she speaks.

Helen

Yea, I am she whom men call Helen, maid
Of Troy. Long years the beauty Paris loved
Has been a stir of corn-flowers by that sea
Where memory is a tide and summers fade
Into the past like shadows.

Faustus

'Tis a trick!
A dream! A phantasy! The dead are dead.
These are no words! A shadow—

Helen

I am she

Whose flesh is dust, whose flesh can never
die;

Helen I am, and yet not Helen, I;
The maid that was, the proud bewildered girl
A world made battle for,—she only sought
Long silence, long forgetfulness of wars,
And burning moon-fire, and the nightingales.
But even dead ye troubled me, ye brought
The wide flare of your searching through the
stars

To harry me, my name was driven leaf
In winds of your great longing, I became
All songs that all men sang me, all faint
dreams

That sought back into time for me, all grief
Of hearts but half-forgetting,—I am these.

I am the pain of young men memorous
Of beauty that they never knew, and loss
They never suffered. I am love that flames
Sometimes at twilight when forlorn sweet
names

Of beautiful dead women make a tune
Like lost Sirenicas. I am the fire
Your passion builded, shadow of your hearts,

A fallen leaf of dusk the riding moon
Of your adoring shakes upon the grass.
Lo! I am she ye seek in every maid
Ye love and leave again. I am desire
Of woman that no man may slake in woman.
This thing am I,—a rose the world has
dreamed.

[She vanishes.]

[There is a long silence. Far off the storm
moans again. In the darkness comes the
voice of Faustus.]

Faustus

'A rose the world has dreamed';—and I, I
stood

Peak-high in those grey mountains of my
mind

And saw all truth, all science, all the laws
Spread out beneath my feet. I sold all things
To know that all I knew was all the world
Of knowledge; and I bought—why, nothing
then,—

Or only this at last—a space to know
That out beyond my farthest reach of
thought

All knowledge shines—a radiance of stars.

ECHO

When in the winter of heart's desire
Sirens are dead, and the songs of fey
Jangled and flat on a musty lyre,
What shall we call to-day?

Miracle wrought from a laugh, a kiss,
Mystery, wonder and breath of May,—
How shall our hearts remember this
When it is yesterday?

GRIEF

Hadst thou been queen in Babylon,
My queen who lies so still,
A proud tumultuous pyre had shone
Upon thy burial hill.

And gold and pearl and amethyst,
Thy crown, thy gilded lyre,
Thy very slaves had kept thee tryst
In that high flaming fire.

And there had flung an ancient dirge
Against the burnished sky,
Like ocean threnodies that surge
And swell and swooning die.

But Love has crucified Death's fears,
The grave has set thee free,
And all the sweetness of slow tears
Is turned to mockery.

O white Lord Christ, Thy love's caress,
Thy prophecy that saith
These dead shall wake from weariness,
Shames all who mourn for death;

And faith in immortality,
Affrighted blind belief
That troubles death's reality,
Has crushed dim fragrant grief.

Nay, I were mad to weep for thee,—
But oh thy silken hair!
And oh the twilight memory,
The darkening despair!

See then, it is not thee I weep,
It is not thou art dead.
Thy lidded eyes are but asleep,
And weary thy dear head;

I weep the silver dreams we wrought,
Long years, long years ago;
I weep the sun-drowsed days that caught
Our dreams in their sweet flow.

AN ETERNITY

There is no dusk to be,
There is no dawn that was,
Only there's now, and now,
And the wind in the grass.

Days I remember of
Now in my heart, are now;
Days that I dream will bloom
White the peach bough.

Dying shall never be
Now in the windy grass;
Now under shaken leaves
Death never was.

ESCAPE

Ships that down the long seas blow,
Gulls that slope the winter stars,
Ye that earth's wide highways know,
Gleam of white wings, gloom of spars,

Ye that follow shattered suns,
Ye that seek the smouldering day,
Lead me where the long road runs,
Lead me your desired way.

Through the intricate dim mind
Seek I after splendid things,
Never hearing where, behind
Pulse of brain, the high soul sings.

Toward the mirror of myself,
Down the ways my own feet trace,
Seek I the eternal God,
Find I there—the seeker's face.

Teach me utterly to leave
This blind dream within a dream,
Where the mole-like senses weave
Out of their deep night a gleam;

Lead me where the bitter sea
Stings unseeing eyes with sight,
Mocks the heart's uncertainty
With itself, stern infinite,

Numbs the brain that comprehends
Neither end nor endlessness,—
Save the solemn flesh that tends
Solemnly its vineyard press;

Where the present hand of God
Gleams across the tempest, where
Naked I may feel His rod,
Pray, unfettered then with prayer.

Ye that follow shattered suns,
Ye that seek the ash of days,
Lead me where the long road runs,
Lead me your desired ways.

THE CIRCLE

Beauty like storms driven
 Where my soul is caught,
 Peace like sorrow shriven
 Where my peace is wrought,
 Still I know thee riven
 Chained in me, low-brought,
 Wind that shakes my heaven,
 Rhythm of my thought.

MY BODY AND I

My body and I, we rested
 Under a thorn one noon,
 We talked of days long wested
 And nights in the moon.

My body lay in shadow,
 Face in the grass, and said,
 "What thorn in what deep meadow
 Will blow when I'm dead?
 And how will you taste blueberries
 Bobbing in stolen milk,
 Or hear Baron Thrush to the cherries,
 Or touch spider silk?"

How, when no flesh makes you weary,
How will you find your rest,
Heels to the logs and brown sherry,
When body is dust?

There'll be no sleep nor forgetting,
For I was lid to your eyes,
I was dusk and sunseting,
I the moonrise.

There'll be no lying in flowers
Adoring the white moon's face,
For I was time and the hours,
Distance and space.
Spirit you, I was earthen,
But color and fragrance are
A dust and a faint wind's burthen,
And dust is the star.

You are the sun unshaded—
But I was mist on the dawn,
Half-lights, shadows that faded,
Glooms that were gone.

Where then, where will you wander
When body's crumbled and dead?"
I'll lie long summers under
And dream you again, I said.

THE BUGLES PASS

Who's for the war!
 Who more
 Makes end of doubting!

Who'll wake
 Now trumpets shake
 The earth with shouting!

I know
 Where dips a way
 Has merry ending;

There go
 The young and gay
 That sing descending.

I know
 Where climbs a road
 Into to-morrow;

There go
 The seed of God
 Toward the furrow;

I know
Where shines the sun
On windy spaces,

Where low
The shadows run,
The swallow races;

But Oh!
When youth is gone
The glory passes.

“TO LUCASTA, ON GOING TO
THE WARS”

Now has all time culminated
In this pulse of dizzy blood;
Now eternity is mated
In this swift suspended flood
Of the sense that sings, *Forever*
Does this perfect Now abide,
And the brain that echoes, *Never,*
Never, never turns again this tide.

Oh, the desperate dumb clinging
Of the unbelieving hands!
Oh, the nerves grown dull with flinging
Up the mind's o'er-written sands
All the fleetingness of wonder,
All the moment's cresting foam,
That withdrawing leaves thereunder
Vanishing, dim legends where it clomb.

Unforgotten, unremembered
Shall thy beauty haunt the brain
Like old magic cities embered
Where the golden sunsets wane;—

Ah, my love let be to-morrow!
All to-morrow is is now,
All we'd lose and all we'd borrow;—
Laugh, and prove all time more brief than
thou.

THE EASTER OF SWORDS

(April 8, 1917)

Now out of this corruption has been born
This incorruption. Out of this decay,
This passionless, sick serving of the day,
This staleness—from this seed, this rotten
 corn
Of shame and doubt, has sprung this flowered
 thorn,
This burgeoned pain, this fire. We that were
 clay
Have lifted up our eyes,—and lo! the spray
Of bright swords and the challenging high
 horn!

So Christ is risen, so the wakened soul
Has lifted back the heavy stone and stands
Aflame with morning; what then if it be
Death, not the lily, shining in his hands?
Already, ere the first reveilles roll,
Our death is swallowed up in victory.

SONNET

(The Parting of the Ways)

We had each other's youth; the halcyon
At wrist, Hymettos but a sunny sail
Beyond each morning's morrow, and the gale
Set westward. Oh, we had the towering sun,
The lift of the year, flood tide,—all things
 begun,
None ended, none attained; even to fail
Was tart grape under tongue, and life a tale
That should have pause for reveries anon.

We had each other's youth; why then what's
 lost
If we who one time, 'top of happy hours,
Found each the other and himself found most,
Finding how self in all selves blows and
 flowers—
If we who were one seeking and one ghost,
Losing each other, find what loss is ours?

MORITURI

Not as Ulysses, overwise with age,
Shall we sail out beyond the westward gate
Into the unknown seas. Not destinate,
And weary of man's seeking, and the mage
Of subtle-changing earth and that vast sky
Where wonder walks, shall we sail curious
To do the last adventure. Oh, not thus,
Not satisfied with living, shall we die.

But we shall meet death running, with our
 lips
Still glad of the morning; and with widening
 eyes
Still thirsty for the light, we shall surprise
The secret under that old hooded Fear,
And touch that face with eager finger-tips,
And find but Change, who crowns with youth
 the year.

THE COST OF WAR

Oh, not the loss of the accomplished thing!
Not dumb farewells, nor long relinquishment
Of beauty had, and golden summer spent,
And savage glory of the fluttering
Torn banners of the rain, and frosty ring
Of moon-white winters, and the imminent
Long-lunging seas, and glowing shoulders
 bent
To race on some smooth beach the sea-gull's
 wing:

Not these, nor all we've been, nor all we've
 loved,
The pitiful familiar names, had moved
Our hearts to weep for them; but oh, the star
The future is! Eternity's too wan
To give again that undefeated, far,
All-possible irradiance of dawn.

THE SHOWMAN

(A Portrait)

A golden wind came running down the grass
And in and out the sun and shadow went
The stir of blowing dresses and the tint
Of scarf and leaf and laughter—ay, it was
The scene for her; she sat, self-mimicking,
The center of her central-whirling world,
And tuned her mood to mockery, and skirled
A showman's lilting flourish on the string.

Her words were swift as swallows in a
gale—

Darted and flashed and poised, and then in
flight

Essayed the Heavens, and then were vanished
quite

In some perplexing Orcus—ran the scale
Of mirth from platypod to the eternal
sprite—

But never left the wares she had for sale.

AN ANTIQUE SHOP

Her chair now, see how curious the line
Of dragons down the old mahogany
And that daguerreotype—you almost see
How red her cheeks and how her earrings
shine.

And that's her lustre crock for cherry wine,
And that—ah, that frail web of filigree—
Grandmother's wedding night-cap, worn
when she
First slept in that old bed you thought so fine.

Ah, little bride, when you and I are fled
Beyond the farthest echo of to-day,
And all our hearts immortalized is dead,
And all our love dreamed amaranth is grey—
Think you a broken net of silver thread
Could mark the world how joyous was life's
May?

THE SILENCE

A song between two silences Life sings,
A melody 'twixt night and patient night.
He strums his lute against the fading light
To gild the shadow that the gloaming brings,
And Love is but a plucking of the strings,
A throb of music staying music's flight,
A little note that hardly shall requite
Thine outstretched hand that mars Life's
lute-playings.

Yet, when the last faint echo of that note
Has stirred the cypress-leaves at eventide,
When night has stilled forever Life's white
throat,
And his gold lute lies shattered by his side,
We two shall follow through a world remote
The silence whereinto Love's music died.

MARIA MEA

What more was She, whom men these thou-
sand years

Have loved and sung and revered and
prayed,

Than thou to me, deep-hearted little maid?

She cradled Godhead in Her arms, Her tears

Were for a visioned cross, a nation's jeers;

Her joy, the helpless hands of God that
strayed

About Her throat, the lullaby She played

An angel's song, a music of the spheres.

But thou with patient faith in things unseen,

Reliance on the beautiful, blind trust

In love's eternity of life, dost screen

My heart from my own heart's most bitter
thrust,

Making my love, late stained with this
world's dust,

Thy happiness, thy glory, and thy teen.

IMAGERY

The tremulously mirrored clouds lie deep,
Enchanted towers bosomed in the stream,
And blossomed coronals of white-thorn
gleam

Within the water where the willows sleep—
Still-imaged willow-leaves whose shadows
steep

The far-reflected sky in dark of dream;
And glimpsed therein the sun-winged
swallows seem

As fleeting memories to those who weep.

So mirrored in thy heart are all desires,
Eternal longings, Youth's inheritance,
All hopes that token immortality,
All griefs whereto immortal grief aspires.
Aweary of a world's reality,
I dream above the imaged pool, Romance.

IMMORTALITY

I

As it hath been, it shall be evermore.
The shadow of the dawning future creeps
Across the drowsy dial-face, and sweeps
The graven numbers marked and told before
By old forgotten hours. So ever o'er
The paths of yesterday to-morrow keeps
A slow insistent course, and evening reaps
Eternity on every sunset shore.

From slumber into slumber all things go;
Our yesterday is dawned from infinite
Oblivion; to-morrow's fading light
Shall darken to that misted morn, and lo!
No terror clothes the oblivion we know.
Breathe deep the gloaming of death's second
night.

IMMORTALITY

II

Since Golgotha the learned doctors prate
Of peace and easeful immortality,
As if strange fruit of that accursed tree
Had bloomed and withered but to dissipate
Old fears, and that a glutton world might sate
Eternal longings with eternity—
A world content the cross of Christ should be
Its suffering and death impersonate.

Ah, Lord, wouldst Thou we let Thy blood
redeem,
Thy torture comfort, and Thy sorrow save?
Or, restless, labor with the soul God gave,
Aspire and suffer, follow beauty's gleam,
Endure the barren agony of dream,
And win brief life—not freedom from the
grave?

IMMORTALITY

III

Nay, I have lived before, and elsewhere
Have lolled against the breast of God's
Unseen,
And watched Infinities of Things careen
With shouted laughter down the startled air,
And caught the Truth by his entangled hair,
And plucked at Beauty's burnished wing to
preen
A broken feather from its golden sheen,
And smiled with Love, slow walking, white
in vair.

How else—when you come running to surprise
My heart with sudden arms about my throat,
And laugh with such a wishful little note—
How else am I, Love's acolyte, so wise
To know that dreams and passion turned
devote,
And joy grown sad, are Love with wide
girl's eyes?

THE ALTAR

I built an unnamed altar in my heart,
And sculptured sacred garlands for a frieze
From delicately petalled memories,—
The fragrance of a word, the fragile art
Of ash-gold hair, dim visioned things that
start

With radiant wings from mist of reveries,
And vanish at the telling as a breeze
Blurs mirrored stars in dark pools set apart.

But, as I worshipped reverently there
The symbols of the beautiful, there came
A light aslant the shadows of my prayer
That silenced mine uplifted lips with shame.
The garlands coldly carven in that fair
Unmeaning tracery enscrolled—thy name.

DUSK

Think not I may not know thee kneeling
there,
For all I lie so silently in death;
Ay, ever as the candle flickereth,
I watch the light weave shadow in thy hair,
I see thy white hands eloquent in prayer,
I hear the agony of sobbing breath;
And words of faith thy sorrow whispereth
Upon thy lips are echoes of despair.

I hear—and wonder how one time we played
At this; called Death's reflection to Love's
glass,
And blurred the image with a laugh, afraid.
Now Death is come and gone, the solemn
mass
Low sung, the mirror shattered; fancies pass,
And heart in heart we weep Love's body laid.

A LIBRARY OF LAW

Adjudicated quarrels of mankind,
Brown row on row!—how well these lawyers
bind

Their records of dead sin,—as if they feared
The hate might spill and their long shelves be
smeared

With slime of human souls,—brown row on
row

Span on Philistine span, a greasy show
Of lust and lies and cruelty, dried grime
Streaked from the finger of the beggar, Time.

I wonder if the little letters there,
Black-stamped and damned eternally to bear
The records of old sin, must never long
For that fair printed world of ancient song,
Where, line on martial line, they stretch
across

The vellum's edge to some irradiant boss
Of scarlet lettering, where sits a quaint
Gilt-featured and attenuated saint,

That world where they grow volatile and
fling

A spray of golden butterflies a-wing
Up through the blue infinities of dream
To brush God's feet, and flutter, wings
a-gleam,

About the veinless marble of His chair,
And make a sudden splendor through His
hair;

That world where they drift ghostly down
the dusk

Of old forgotten twilights, toss the musk
Of primroses against his face who reads,
Make prayers from the clicking of old beads,
Blow long dead summers through the naked
trees

Leaf after leaf, call back faint memories
Of lips that once were sweet, and eyes once
glad,

And little hands that set the spirit mad
With plucking of invisible lute strings,—

! All, all the vanished magic of dead things.

A SAMPLER

She stitches quaint embroideries
My lady of white hands,
With fishes from the China seas
And beasts from foreign lands.

And flowers out of Araby
And sage Saharan ants,
And cockatoos from Nickerie
And wrinkled elephants,

And ships with swelling purple sails
And cargoes pavonine,
And whalermen and spouting whales,
And porpoises in line.

And cows of rich autumnal hues
A-browse in flowered meads,
And shepherd dogs in buffs and blues
And shepherd boys in tweeds.

She weaves them all into a net,
And, silk for Circe's wine,
Enchants them there with mignonette
In intricate design.

And thence methinks she has that art
Whereby her fingers twist
Into the dull web of my heart
Silver and amethyst.

BALLADE

"A pilgrim cowed in light is love,
Who kneels at many shrines and prays."
So sang I knowing naught thereof.
"He kneels beside the thronging ways
And ever in the dust he lays
His reverent soul at Mary's feet
Beneath her all-caressing gaze.
For only dreams of love are sweet."

"And lo, a pagan god is love,
His shining head bound round with bays."
So sang I knowing nought thereof.
"He breathes the breath of burning Mays
Plucking from Autumn's lap of days
Gold fruits of life to crush and eat,
Yet lustful are his lips always,
For only dreams of love are sweet."

But last I learned the truth of love,
That carnal love the world obeys.
'Tis but a web which Gaea wove
With warp of pain and weft of days,
Where vast, insensate, o'er the haze
Of mortal dreams she has her seat,—
A web to catch whom soon she slays.
For only dreams of love are sweet.

ENVOY

How fairer than the garnered maize
The shadows in the windy wheat,
And throstle notes than roundelays.
For only dreams of love are sweet.

THE 'CHANTRESS

Lo, the lady Margaret!
Cunningly her fingers fret
 Witcheries in clay.
She is Circe, sorceress
Mulberries make red her press,
Moon-ripe poppy blooms confess
 Her way.

Lo, the lady Margaret
Spreadeth beauty for a net,
 Springeth souls thereby,
Springeth souls to light her clay,
This for laughter, this to pray,
This to dance the Spring away,
 And die.

Lo, the lady Margaret!
Her dark hair is springes set,
 Her two hands a spell.
Whom she tangleth, him they bind,
Ariel in oak-tree rind,
In the dark clay, dumb and blind,
 To dwell!

Lo, the lady Margaret!
All her dryad folk forget,
 Bubbles in the bowl—
April and the running seas,
Stars and rainbows, what are these?—
So her clay have foam and lees
 Of soul.

A SONG FOR THE HARP

Iseult, Iseult of Ireland,
The years are born again,
Again Tintagel's towers stand,
And blows the corn again,
The russet corn again.

Again, again the shoreward waves
Make wondrous undertone,
That whispers down the forest naves
When melody is flown,
When twilight birds are flown.

Iseult, Iseult, remember thou
How soft the music swept—
Nay till the lily moon arow
I'll dream that time has slept,
All flower-like has slept.

So softly was the harping wrought
As in the web of sound
The wings of melody were caught,
And fluttering music bound,
And moth-winged music bound.

Iseult, Iseult, when night is drawn
I'll cross the Irish sea,
And in the moon's white fragrant dawn
Steal down the dusk to thee,
Across the years to thee.

Iseult, my queen, all loves that were
Born on a kiss and killed,
Resurgent with the surging year,
Are in the heart fulfilled,
The secret heart fulfilled.

Forget? Nay thou can'st not forget
Nor peaceful close thine eyes.
Upon thy rose the thorn regret
Shall scar with memories,
Scar peace with memories.

CERTAIN POETS

Oh, words and words and words,—a twitter-
ing blur

Of sparrow wings that puff up from the rye
When something hidden stirs there; up they
fly

A wheeling, huddled, undecided whir,
And what it was aroused them, Pan or cur,
Appears not,—save that 'twas a prodigy,
A portent sure, and, with its passing by,
A new world dawned, and grubs and rye-
fields were.

And so their verses go,—a clamorous puff
Of words unformed, unbeautiful, distraught,
That eddy in the mood like feathered stuff,
And underneath the sound of them a thought,
Of something hidden stirring,—like enough
Apocalypse or naughtiness—or naught.

A portent then! a dumb and groping urge
Of something blind like voices in a mist;
! 'Lord, but it 'wilders one! To feel it twist
Old earth with iron, mutter in the forge,

Threaten in smoke;—why, look you, we're
a-verge

Of worlds undreamt, and every silly fist
That curses God's a sign! There's wondrous
grist

A-grinding, wondrous new-sown corn
a-surge.'

New worlds! These things were seedling in
dead Cain.

But you, for you old magics yet remain
Of restless whispering winds that press along
Dim casements of the sense-enshuttered
brain.

Beauty has called you, and the worlds that
wane

From crescent into crescent of thin song.

A SONG

Youth is old before his time,
Hélas! Heighho!
Watcheth where the white stars climb,
Readeth windy wheat to rhyme,
Danceth to no tune, no chime,
Heighho!

Youth is drear before his days,
Hélas! Heighho!
Weepeth where the cypress sways,
Chanteth Grief a doleful praise,
Danceth to no roundelays,
Heighho!

Youth is done with lovely Life,
Hélas! Heighho!
Putteth Lady Hope to knife,
Taketh Mistress Worm to wife,
Hath no joyous Hippogrife,
Hélas!
Danceth to no merry fife,
Heighho!

LILIES

Lily, red wood lily,
Flaunting fairy lily,
Lily springing where the heel
Was down-impressed of Pan;
Lily at whose throat the moon
Flutters like a moth a-swoon—
Round and round thy shining reel
Deft-foot things of Pan.

Lily, Pan's red lily,
Sunlight-drunken lily,
Golden, golden lily tipped
With dawn's drowned fire;
Lily, burning lily,
Mad and mad and shrilly
Trip the hooves where Pan has tripped,
Gleam the flanks mad Pan has nipped,
Gyre, gyre, gyre,
Mad and mad and shrilly,
Pipes go never stilly,
Hooves make eager rhythm where
The song is thee,

Shrilly, shrilly, shrilly,
Flare and flute note trilly,
Hearken, hearken, hearken there,
Shadows dance and darken there,
Hand and hoof and haunches bare
Encircle thee.

O lily, red wood lily,
Flaunting fairy lily,
Never stop the piping of the Pan god's
tune:—

“Life's a music hath no word,
Death's a lute no hand has stirred,
Eternity's a rondeau in an old, old rune.”
Never stop their piping there,
Never yield them—never spare,
Lest thou dream Christ's lily fair—
More fair than thou.

CHARITY

Since my Beloved chambered me
 To beat within her breast,
 And took my soul to light a shrine
 Her soul had decked and dressed,
 And caught my songs about her throat,—
 Dissected, known, confessed,
 I dwell within her charity
 A half-unwelcome guest.

TO MY SON

You are her laughter
 Blown to a rose,
 Singing heard after
 The song's at the close.

You are the sorrow
 Was dusk in her eyes,
 You are the morrow
 Is night where she lies.

SOUL-SIGHT

Like moon-dark, like brown water you
escape,
O laughing mouth, O sweet uplifted lips.
Within the peering brain old ghosts take
shape;
You flame and wither as the white foam
slips
Back from the broken wave: sometimes a
start,
A gesture of the hands, a way you own
Of bending that smooth head above your
heart,—
Then these are vanished, then the dream is
gone.

Oh, you are too much mine and flesh of me
To seal upon the brain, who in the blood
Are so intense a pulse, so swift a flood
Of beauty, such unceasing instancy.
Dear unimagined brow, unvisioned face,
All beauty has become your dwelling place.

JASON

I lay where stain of poppies crept
 Across a summer hill,
And drowsy droning grasses slept
With heavy heads, and wild bees kept
 Their slumbrous music still.

I lay and let my lazy dreams
 Drift with the idle breeze
Like leaves that float on autumn streams,
Gilded as fairy quinquereemes,
 Down to their magic seas.

I dreamed,—and all the fragrant earth
 Was as a sailing cloud.
From tears and sorrows, for my mirth
I wove a rainbow mist, and birth
 I folded in death's shroud.

I dreamed, but ever from the vale
 Beneath the sun-drowsed hills,
There rose the pulsing of the flail,
The hiss of scythes, the mower's hail,
 The hum of water mills:

And through the voices of the fields
A sweeter voice that said,
"It is the coward heart that yields
To dreams its heritage, nor wields
A sword unscabbarded."

Ah, voice that singeth bravely there,
Dost think that dreams are peace?
Dost think it cowardice to dare
Eternity of blind despair
For gold of fairy fleece?

THE HILLS OF CLEEVE

I heard the fairies keening on the uplands
yestereve

When scarce the vagrant grey of dusk was
done,

When sheep were calling darkly down the
shadow hills of Cleeve

And far below the village candles shone.

I heard the hare-bells knelling in the wet
wind off the wold,

I heard the clouds go creeping down the hill,

I heard the dew soft falling from the last
long rifts of gold,

I heard how singingly the stars were still.

I heard the fairies keening on the uplands all
night long,

A-weeping soft and sadly for their queen;

"She's vanished like the echo of her own
forlorn sweet song,

She's turned our twilight dance to twilight
teen.

“Oh, dreams are only dim desires, and songs
are only tunes,
The flowers deck the graves of other years,
The Springs are fleeting children of a thousand
fleeting Junes,
And only old and endless are our tears.”

INDIAN SUMMERS

(I)

The Day of Falling Leaves
When gold October reaves
The May's
Lost Roundelays,

When Autumn stoops to list
The wind, mad organist,
Pipe tunes
Of dancing Junes,

And Autumn's butterflies
Drift earthward, petal-wise,
A-swing
On perilous wing,—

(2)

So, in our passion's death,
When knowledge whispereth
 With wise
Unholy eyes,

And thy sweet flowered mouth
Is grey with Autumn's drouth
 And love
Dreams not thereof,

Our Day of Falling Leaves
Calls back the Spring, deceives
 The sense
With transience.

THE REED-PLAYER

(After Macleod)

A hollow reed against his lips
 He played a soaring strain,
That fled his dancing finger tips
Light as a swallow wheels and dips
 Above the flowing grain.

The Song of Songs it was, strange wrought
Beyond the heather hills
From memories and dreams, and taught
By shepherd women who had caught
Its lilt from mountain rills.

The beating of a heart I heard
In that forlorn sweet air,
The singing of a distant bird,
A sigh, a softly uttered word
And echoed laughter there.

"Play me a song of Death," I whispered then.
He raised his hollow reed as one who longs
To turn to dreams, and smiled, and played
again
The Song of Songs.

BACCALAUREATE

A year or two, and grey Euripides,
 And Horace and a Lydia or so,
 And Euclid and the brush of Angelo,
 Darwin on man, Vergilius on bees,
 The nose and dialogues of Socrates,
 Don Quixote, Hudibras and Trinculo,
 How worlds are spawned and where the dead
 gods go,—
 All shall be shard of broken memories.

And there shall linger other, magic things,—
 The fog that creeps in wanly from the sea,
 The rotten harbor smell, the mystery
 Of moonlit elms, the flash of pigeon wings,
 The sunny Green, the old-world peace that
 clings
 About the college yard, where endlessly
 The dead go up and down. These things
 shall be
 Enchantment of our hearts' remembering.

And these are more than memories of youth
Which earth's four winds of pain shall blow
away;

These are youth's symbols of eternal truth,
Symbols of dream and imagery and flame,
Symbols of those same verities that play
Bright through the crumbling gold of a great
name.

REALITIES

I

The people of the earth go down,
Each with his wealth of dream,
To barter in the market town
A star for a torch's gleam;
To barter hope for certitude,
And mysteries of love
For passion's little interlude;
And joy for the laugh thereof.

They sell their treasuries of dreams
For dream's realities,
Their wealth of fairy quinquereemes
For ships of salter seas,

Their gods for shapes of tortured stone,
Their faith for shrines that fall,
The unknown for the touched and known,
Life at the living's call.

They barter songs for the throat that sings,
Frail dawns for drowsing days,
Eternal moods for brittle Things,
Thrush notes for roundelays,
The flame of thorn and eglantine
For fallow labored lands,
Tall lilies touched of Proserpine
For lilies of fair hands.

They buy and pass no more that way;
Their eyes forget the star,
Forget the mysteries of May,
Forget the dim and far.
They build them tower and high wall
To bolt against the spring,
To shutter out the mavis' call,
And heart's remembering.

II

But Time, a taper guttering,
Drops in a slow decay.

And Youth, a white moth fluttering,
Blows with the wind away;
And walls and towers made of hands,
And faith, and roundelay,
And laughter, and red fallow lands,
Pass like the withered spray.

And certitude grows rank with ease,
And idols turn to mold,
And passion's cup holds bitter lees,
And pale, soft hands grow cold;
All shimmering reality,
The world that shines and seems,
The earth, the mountains and the sea,
Are shadows of old dreams.

III

Yet when the splendor of the earth
Is fallen into dust,
When plow and sword and fame and worth
Are rotted with black rust,
The Dream, still deathless, still unborn,
Blows in the hearts of men,
The star, the mystery, the morn,
Bloom agelessly again.

Older than Time with ages shod,
The matins of a thrush,
Deeper than reverence of God,
The summer evening's hush.
Than trampling death is grief more strong,
Love than its avatars,
And echo of an echoed song
Shall shake the eternal stars.





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